

Criterion A: Focus and method

This criterion focuses on the topic, the research question and the methodology. It assesses the explanation of the focus of the research (this includes the topic and the research question), how the research will be undertaken, and how the focus is maintained throughout the essay.

Unpacking the Criterion-

1. The topic chosen is identified and explained to readers in terms of contextualizing and justifying its worthiness.
 - a. How well does the research paper identify and communicate the chosen topic?
2. The purpose and focus of the research to be addressed is within the scope of a 4,000-word extended essay, is outlined in the introduction and specified as a research question.
 - a. Is the research question appropriate given the scope of the task? For example, is the topic sufficiently focused to be adequately addressed within the requirements of the task?
 - b. Is the research question clearly stated, focused and based on/situated against background knowledge and understanding of the chosen subject/topic area?
 - c. Is the focus of the research question maintained throughout the essay?
3. The research is planned and appropriate methods of data collection (methodology) are chosen and identified in order to address the research question.
 - a. Is there evidence of effective and informed source/method selection with regard to the choice of appropriate sources and/or method(s) used to gather information, including narrowing of scope the range of sources/methods, in order to address the research question within the constraints of the word limit?
4. Sources/methods are considered relevant/appropriate or sufficient in so far as the academic standards for the discipline are concerned. For example, for an economics essay, it would not be sufficient to only use textbooks but rather include reports and data. There is no consideration of the research question as such.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>The topic is communicated unclearly and incompletely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and explanation of the topic is limited; the purpose and focus of the research is unclear, or does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in the subject for which it is registered. <p>The research question is stated but not clearly expressed or too broad.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research question is too broad in scope to be treated effectively within the word limit and requirements of the task, or does not lend itself to a systematic investigation in the subject for which it is registered. • The intent of the research question is understood but has not been clearly expressed and/or the discussion of the essay is not focused on the research question. <p>Methodology of the research is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The source(s) and/or method(s) to be used are limited in range given the topic and research question. • There is limited evidence that their selection was informed.
3–4	<p>The topic is communicated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and explanation of the research topic is communicated; the purpose and focus of the research is adequately clear, but only partially appropriate. <p>The research question is clearly stated but only partially focused.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research question is clear but the discussion in the essay is only partially focused and connected to the research question. <p>Methodology of the research is mostly complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source(s) and/or method(s) to be used are generally relevant and appropriate given the topic and research question. • There is some evidence that their selection(s) was informed. • If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered no more than four marks can be awarded for this criterion.
5–6	<p>The topic is communicated accurately and effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and explanation of the research topic is effectively communicated; the purpose and focus of the research is clear and appropriate. <p>The research question is clearly stated and focused.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research question is clear and addresses an issue of research that is appropriately connected to the discussion in the essay. <p>Methodology of the research is complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appropriate range of relevant source(s) and/or method(s) have been applied in relation to the topic and research question. • There is evidence of effective and informed selection of sources and/or methods.

Advice for students

The table below is designed to help you think about the assessment criteria and whether you have addressed the expectations within your essay. You do not need to address all of the questions posed, but they do provide some guidance in terms of what to consider.

- Does this essay meet the requirements for the subject for which you are registering it?
- Is your research question stated as a question?
- Have you explained how your research question relates to the subject that you selected for the extended essay?
- Have you given an insight into why your area of study is important?
- Is your research question feasible within the scope of the task? Could your research question be “answered” or it is too vague?
- Did you refer to your research question throughout the essay (not only in the introduction and conclusion)?
- Did you explain why you selected your methodology?
- Are there other possible methods that could be used or applied to answer your research question? How might this change the direction of your research?
- If you stated a particular methodology in the introduction of your essay, or specific sources, have you used them?
- Are there any references listed in the bibliography that were not directly cited in the text?

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

This criterion assesses the extent to which the research relates to the subject area/discipline used to explore the research question, or in the case of the world studies extended essay, the issue addressed and the two disciplinary perspectives applied, and additionally the way in which this knowledge and understanding is demonstrated through the use of appropriate terminology and concepts.

Unpacking the Criterion-

1. The research question being investigated is put into the context of the subject/discipline/issue.
 - Demonstration of the appropriate and relevant selection and application of the sources is identified.
2. Knowledge and understanding of the topic chosen and the research question posed is demonstrated with appropriate subject-specific terminology.
 - The use of subject-specific terminology and/or concepts is an indicator of knowledge and understanding of the discipline(s)/issue discussed.
3. Sources/methods are assessed here in terms of their appropriateness to the research question.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>Knowledge and understanding is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection of source material has limited relevance and is only partially appropriate to the research question. • Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is anecdotal, unstructured and mostly descriptive with sources not effectively being used. <p>Use of terminology and concepts is unclear and limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject-specific terminology and/or concepts are either missing or inaccurate, demonstrating limited knowledge and understanding.
3–4	<p>Knowledge and understanding is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection of source material is mostly relevant and appropriate to the research question. • Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is clear; there is an understanding of the sources used but their application is only partially effective. <p>Use of terminology and concepts is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of subject-specific terminology and concepts is mostly accurate, demonstrating an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding. • If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered no more than four marks can be awarded for this criterion.
5–6	<p>Knowledge and understanding is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection of source materials is clearly relevant and appropriate to the research question. • Knowledge of the topic/discipline(s)/issue is clear and coherent and sources are used effectively and with understanding. <p>Use of terminology and concepts is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of subject-specific terminology and concepts is accurate and consistent, demonstrating effective knowledge and understanding.

Advice for students

The table below is designed to help you think about the assessment criteria and whether you have addressed the expectations within your essay. You do not need to address all of the questions posed, but they do provide some guidance in terms of what to consider.

- Have you explained how your research question relates to a specific subject you selected for the extended essay?
- Have you used relevant terminology and concepts throughout your essay as they relate to your particular area of research?
- Is it clear that the sources you are using are relevant and appropriate to your research question?
- Do you have a range of sources, or have you only relied on one particular type, for example internet sources?
- Is there a reason why you might not have a range? Is this justified?

Criterion C: Critical Thinking

This criterion assesses the extent to which critical-thinking skills have been used to analyze and evaluate the research undertaken.

Unpacking the Criterion-

1. The selection and application of the research presented is relevant and appropriate to the research question.
2. The appropriateness of sources/methods in terms of how they have been used in the development of the argument presented.
3. The analysis of the research is effective and focused on the research question.
4. The discussion of the research develops a clear and coherent reasoned argument in relation to the research question.
5. There is a critical evaluation of the arguments presented in the essay.
6. Unlikely or unexpected outcomes can also demonstrate critical thinking.

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–3	<p>The research is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research presented is limited and its application is not clearly relevant to the RQ. • Analysis is limited. <p>There is limited analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there are conclusions to individual points of analysis these are limited and not consistent with the evidence. <p>Discussion/evaluation is limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An argument is outlined but this is limited, incomplete, descriptive or narrative in nature. • The construction of an argument is unclear and/or incoherent in structure hindering understanding. • Where there is a final conclusion, it is limited and not consistent with the arguments/evidence presented. • There is an attempt to evaluate the research, but this is superficial. <p><i>If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered no more than three marks can be awarded for this criterion.</i></p>
4–6	<p>The research is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some research presented is appropriate and its application is partially relevant to the Research question. <p>Analysis is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is analysis but this is only partially relevant to the research question; the inclusion of irrelevant research detracts from the quality of the argument. • Any conclusions to individual points of analysis are only partially supported by the evidence. <p>Discussion/evaluation is adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An argument explains the research but the reasoning contains inconsistencies. • The argument may lack clarity and coherence but this does not significantly hinder understanding. • Where there is a final or summative conclusion, this is only partially consistent with the arguments/evidence presented. • The research has been evaluated but not critically.
7–9	<p>The research is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the research is appropriate and its application is clearly relevant to the research question. <p>Analysis is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research is analyzed in a way that is clearly relevant to the research question; the inclusion of less relevant research rarely detracts from the quality of the overall analysis. • Conclusions to individual points of analysis are supported by the evidence but there are some minor inconsistencies. <p>Discussion/evaluation is good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective reasoned argument is developed from the research, with a conclusion supported by the evidence presented. • This reasoned argument is clearly structured and coherent and supported by a final or summative conclusion; minor inconsistencies may hinder the strength of the overall argument. • The research has been evaluated, and this is partially critical.
10–12	<p>The research is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research is appropriate to the research question and its application is consistently relevant. <p>Analysis is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research is analyzed effectively and clearly focused on the research question; the inclusion of less relevant research does not significantly detract from the quality of the overall analysis. • Conclusions to individual points of analysis are effectively supported by the evidence. <p>Discussion/evaluation is excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective and focused reasoned argument is developed from the research with a conclusion reflective of the evidence presented.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This reasoned argument is well structured and coherent; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder the strength of the overall argument or the final or summative conclusion.• The research has been critically evaluated. |
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Advice for students

The table below is designed to help you think about the assessment criteria and whether you have addressed the expectations within your essay. You do not need to address all of the questions posed, but they do provide some guidance in terms of what to consider.

- Have you made links between your results and data collected and your research question?
- If you included data or information that is not directly related to your research question have you explained its importance?
- Are your conclusions supported by your data?
- If you found unexpected information or data have you discussed its importance?
- Have you provided a critical evaluation of the methods you selected?
- Have you considered the reliability of your sources (peer-reviewed journals, internet, and so on)?
- Have you mentioned and evaluated the significance of possible errors that may have occurred in your research?
- Are all your suggestions of errors or improvements relevant?
- Have you evaluated your research question?
- Have you compared your results or findings with any other sources?
- Is there an argument that is clear and easy to follow and directly linked to answering your research question, and which is supported by evidence?

Criterion D: Presentation

This criterion assesses the extent to which the presentation follows the standard format expected for academic writing and the extent to which this aids effective communication.

Unpacking the Criterion-

1. **Structure:** the structure of the essay is compatible with the expected conventions of a research paper in the subject for which the essay has been submitted. (Examiners, supervisors and students are advised to check the guidance given in the *Extended essay guide* for the relevant subject.)
2. **Layout:** title page, table of contents, page numbers, section headings (where appropriate), effective inclusion of illustrative materials (tables, graphs, illustrations, appropriately labeled) and quotations, bibliography and referencing.
 - The referencing system should be correctly and consistently applied and should contain the minimum information as detailed in the Extended essay guide. (If referencing does not meet this minimum standard work should be considered as a case of possible academic misconduct.)
 - The extended essay has not exceeded the maximum word limit. (If the essay exceeds 4,000 words, examiners should not read or assess beyond the maximum 4,000-word limit. Students who exceed the word limit will compromise the assessment of their extended essay across all criteria. For example, in criterion B, any knowledge and understanding demonstrated beyond the 4,000-word limit will be treated as if it were not present; in criterion C, any analysis, discussion or evaluation made beyond the 4,000-word limit will be treated as if the point had not been made. Given the holistic nature of the assessment criteria, students who write in excess of the word limit will self-penalize across all criteria.)

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–2	Presentation is acceptable. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The structure of the essay is generally appropriate in terms of the expected conventions for the topic, argument and subject in which the essay is registered.• Some layout considerations may be missing or applied incorrectly.• Weaknesses in the structure and/or layout do not significantly impact the reading, understanding or evaluation of the extended essay.
3–4	Presentation is good. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The structure of the essay clearly is appropriate in terms of the expected conventions for the topic, the argument and subject in which the essay is registered.• Layout considerations are present and applied correctly.• The structure and layout support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the extended essay.

Advice for students

The table below is designed to help you think about the assessment criteria and whether you have addressed the expectations within your essay. You do not need to address all of the questions posed, but they do provide some guidance in terms of what to consider.

- Have you read and understood the presentation requirements of the extended essay?
- Have you chosen a font that will be easy for examiners to read on-screen?
- Is your essay double-spaced and size 12 font?
- Are title and research question mentioned on the cover page?
- Are all pages numbered?
- Have you prepared a correct table of contents?
- Do the page numbers in the table of contents match the page numbers in the text?
- Is your essay subdivided into correct sub-sections, if this is applicable to the subject?
- Are all figures and tables properly numbered and labeled?
- Does your bibliography contain only the sources cited in the text?
- Did you use the same reference system throughout the essay?
- Does the essay have less than 4,000 words?
- Is all the material presented in the appendices relevant and necessary?
- Have you proofread the text for spelling or grammar errors?

Criterion E: Engagement

This criterion assesses the student's engagement with their research focus and the research process. It will be applied by the examiner at the end of the assessment of the essay, after considering the student's *Reflections on planning and progress form*.

Unpacking the Criterion-

- Engagement with the process: the student has engaged in discussions with their supervisor in the planning and progress of their research; the student is able to reflect on and refine the research process, and react to insights gained through the exploration of their research question; the student is able to evaluate decisions made throughout the research process and suggest improvements for their own working practices.
- Engagement with their research focus: an insight into the student's thinking, intellectual initiative and creative approach through reflections on the thought and research process; the extent to which the student voice is present rather than that of the supervisor and academics; is the student's engagement reflected?

Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1-2	Engagement is limited. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflections on decision-making and planning are mostly descriptive.• These reflections communicate a limited degree of personal engagement with the research focus and/or research process.
3-4	Engagement is good. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflections on decision-making and planning are analytical and include reference to conceptual understanding and skill development.• These reflections communicate a moderate degree of personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating some intellectual initiative.
5-6	Engagement is excellent. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflections on decision-making and planning are evaluative and include reference to the student's capacity to consider actions and ideas in response to setbacks experienced in the research process.• These reflections communicate a high degree of intellectual and personal engagement with the research focus and process of research, demonstrating authenticity, intellectual initiative and/or creative approach in the student voice.

Advice for students

The table below is designed to help you think about the assessment criteria and whether you have addressed the expectations within your essay. You do not need to address all of the questions posed, but they do provide some guidance in terms of what to consider.

- Have you demonstrated your engagement with your research topic and the research process?
- Have you highlighted challenges you faced and how you overcame them?
- Will the examiner get a sense of your intellectual and skills development?
- Will the examiner get a sense of your creativity and intellectual initiative?
- Will the examiner get a sense of how you responded to actions and ideas in the research process?